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ARYANS *and* NON-ARYANS

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F R A N Z B O A S

I.

THE present policies of the German government are based on the assumption that an "Aryan" has certain biologically determined qualities that are entirely foreign to every "Non-Aryan." All members of each race, it is claimed, have certain unescapable hereditary characteristics which determine their mental life and their social behavior.

These beliefs are based on a complete misunderstanding of what constitutes a race and of the way in which we arrive at the concept of a racial type. The population of many parts of the world has remained stable for a long time and there are certain bodily traits that occur with great frequency. In Sicily, for instance, we find among other traits, short stature, brunette complexion, dark hair, and brown eyes. From these general impressions we construct a type of the true Sicilian. If we should search through the whole population for individuals who conform strictly to our ideal, we should find that there are very few only, the fewer, the more sharply we define the type by taking into consideration numerous traits. The reason for this is that many of the traits that strike the observer, because they are very frequent, are quite variable. There are Sicilians who are tall and short, brunette and light, brown eyed and gray or blue eyed, but these are disregarded in what we call the "race." In other words, every "race," even the most homogeneous one we know, consists of individuals differing considerably in bodily form.

That unity of race, which is the foundation of the policies of the German government, does not exist. A race consists of individuals diverse in bodily build; and heredity is a matter that is important in the study of the forms of the offspring, but there is no such thing as racial heredity even in relatively pure groups in regard to those traits that occur in many different forms in that group. Furthermore, similarity of a few traits does not prove homogeneity of descent, for there are often other fundamentally different traits not so readily observed that prove distinctness of origin. Thus the hereditary characteristics of the blood of the "Nordic" race are decidedly different in different regions and this may well be more significant than blondness. If we want to speak of racial heredity we should have to prove that *all* members of the race partake of the same characteristics as opposed

to those of another race and for the European and West Asiatic races this cannot be done. The eminent German anthropologist, Eugen Fischer, went so far as to say—before the Hitler revolution—that every individual is a racial unit,—although he has found it now convenient to join the panegyric of Nordic praise; and E. Kretschmer tried to prove in 1932 that the best types of man developed when there is an intercrossing of types of the White Race,—but his book was withdrawn by the publisher.

There is even less sense in the claim that physiological, mental, or social characteristics are racially determined. The differences between individuals of the same race in regard to behavior are so great that all attempts to prove constant racial characteristics are no more than an expression of subjective impressions without even the slightest attempt to prove their racial significance.

It must be understood as a fundamental axiom that heredity is a matter of transmission of qualities from parents to children, that in every race are contained so many different forms that the characteristics of the race are merely the conglomerate of all the numerous distinct lines of descent contained in the population.

It is a pseudo-science, built up to sustain ancient prejudices, that is called upon by the present German government to justify its claim that a single drop of non-Aryan blood is sufficient to exclude from the community of Germans even those who are most intensely German in feeling and thought.

II.

FIRST of all, what is an Aryan? Aryan is a linguistic term. Most of the European languages and a number of Asiatic languages such as Armenian, Persian, and Hindustani, are called Aryan because they have in common certain traits which indicate that there was once one language, nowadays called the Aryan language which gradually spread over a large area, not without assimilating many foreign linguistic elements, and developed into all the different "Aryan" languages spoken today. In this sense an Aryan is anyone who speaks an Aryan language, Swede as well as American Negro or Hindu. In other words Aryan is a linguistic term and has nothing to do with race. In speaking of the Aryans as a race we are merely following the undemonstrable hypothesis of certain students who claim that the type of man which inhabits northwestern Europe, usually known as the Nordic type, spoke Aryan and no other tongue before this language was scattered far and wide. In other words, when Aryan is said the blond North European is meant.

Whether the blond North Europeans really spoke Aryan no man can say. The origin of the "primitive" languages reconstructed from later forms of speech lies far back and in view of the constant migrations of mankind and the fluctuation between periods of intercourse and those of isolation it is quite impossible for anyone to state what language was spoken by men who lived 10,000 years ago or still earlier. We can find out what kind of stone implements, bone carvings or pottery they produced, but there is nothing to tell us what language they spoke. Methods used in basket-weaving and pottery-making often cling to the soil with incredible tenacity and are transmitted from one people to another, so that even the identification of a people from its manual products often leaves room for doubt.

The view of the present German government is to regard the terms Aryan and non-Aryan as biological terms of hereditary significance. Hence we may dismiss the question of which language was spoken by the forbears of the Germans and simply make the point that the use of the terms Aryan and non-Aryan is based on ignorance of their meaning.

A judgment of the German policy requires an answer to two questions; one, what, racially, are the wrongly so-called "Aryans" and "non-Aryans"? the other, to what extent does the behavior of a single human being and of a people depend upon hereditary traits?

Roughly speaking, we may perhaps divide the population of Europe into three groups, which are situated in strata extending from west to east; in the north the tall, blond, blue-eyed Northwest Europeans; in the middle, in the region of the Alps and east and west of them, the darker Alpine type; and in the south the small, very dark Mediterranean type of Spain, Italy and Southern France. Of course, there are other local types which do not conform well with such a hard and fast classification.

We do not know the age of these larger groups. By analogy with the development of animal forms we may assume that in very early times groups of human beings came to be isolated long enough to develop certain types through inbreeding, selection and through the influence of the environment in which they lived. How this process took place is hard to say. We only know that closely related animals long isolated by natural conditions frequently exhibit slight differences of form. For instance, in the case of land animals on isolated islands we can find distinguishing characteristics on every single island. These, however, are not necessarily present in all individuals.

Besides the occurrence of local varieties, we find in the case of human beings that many racial forms are quite comparable to those of domesticated animals. Blondness, the deep blackness of skin and the curliness of hair in the Negro are analogous to the same features in domesticated

animals. Eugen Fischer and B. Klatt have proved conclusively that blondness and blueness of the eyes are characteristics of domesticated animals and very rare in wild animals. We have blond horses, rabbits, and pigs. We have black poodles, with tightly curling hair. These forms, too, hardly ever occur among wild mammals. Anatomically, human blondness is exactly parallel to the blondness of domesticated animals. The occurrence of blondness in all kinds of domesticated animals proves that blondness may have developed independently in different races, as in those of western and eastern Europe.

Now the taming of animals is based essentially upon change of diet and upon protection against climate and enemies. In the earliest type of domestication artificial breeding of certain strains hardly played a part. We know that even in the glacial period, perhaps 50,000 years ago, man prepared his food by the use of fire, and knew how to protect himself with weapons. Therefore we might say that man is the oldest domesticated animal, self-domesticated through the use of fire and weapons.

III.

THE complete isolation essential for the development of fixed types did not last up to recent times, certainly not even up to the end of the glacial period.

All that we know of the history of mankind points to constant migration. During the glacial period the severe climatic changes forced man to abandon the ice-covered regions. The dessication of Central Asia drove him to outlying districts, into Europe and southern Asia. From Asia man went to America and occupied the New World from the extreme north to the extreme south, passing from the arctic through the temperate zone, through the tropics and as far as the inhospitable southern end of South America. The Negroes of the upper Nile region overflowed the greater part of South Africa. Probably much later the Malays traversed the whole width of the Indian and Pacific Oceans and reached Madagascar.

Even the distribution of modern languages is indicative of the restlessness of man, for the dissemination of languages requires personal contact between peoples. In America the native of New Mexico speaks a language closely related to the language of Alaska. The language of the Caribs is spoken in Southern Brazil and in the West Indies. Russia today harbors many tribes speaking Finnish languages, an indication of the recent expansion of the Russians toward the east. In the Middle Ages Arabian became the dominant language of North Africa. All these migrations have led to

a mixing of tribes. The history of Spain offers a good example of this. In early times the peninsula was inhabited by Iberians. Then the Phoenicians founded their colonies on its coasts. Later on the Celts of Gaul came in great numbers and intermingled with the natives. The Roman colonists followed and romanized the entire country. Then came the migrations of the Goths, who dominated the country for a long time. During the great Mohammedan period the Moors conquered a large part of Spain, settled and mixed with the natives. Numerous Jews were living there and they mixed with these other types. The greatness of Spain developed at the time when the mixture of peoples was at its height.

In other parts of Europe conditions were similar. Germany in particular has always been the scene of migrations: from north to south, from east to west and vice versa, swarms of people passed through the country. Assimilation of eastern, Slavic people through colonization was a later phase of the process of mixture. What we see now is the result of these historical events.

Even the bodily structure of man of former periods testifies to the importance of early migrations. England was once inhabited by a people characterized by long, narrow heads. Then came a people among whom broad, round heads predominated and who brought with them a different civilization. This type disappeared and was replaced by the blond northwest Europeans who occupied the greater part of the country. Only in Wales and in several other districts do we find types rather suggestive of the types of Portugal. In Norway, which is commonly regarded as a purely northwest European country, the South is inhabited by people of a different type, of darker skin and hair-coloring and of a different build. In America we find one native type which occurs sporadically from Mexico to North California.

A settled life developed at a time when land became personal property, either of the free peasant or of the lord whose serfs were bound to his property. Since that time more definite, local types of man have developed which are all based, however, on the racial mixtures formed during the period of migrations.

Within a village in which landed property is handed down from father to son, where the wife is selected from the same village, pronounced local types may develop through inbreeding, although the differences among the ancestors will still make themselves felt in the individuals composing each family.

We are too much inclined to suppose that if all the individuals of such a group are similar in regard to color of their hair and eyes and physical build, they must be similar in all other respects. This is not at all the

case. The physical attributes of the body are not so closely bound together that they are inherited en masse. On the contrary, the study of heredity shows that physical form is never inherited as a whole but that the characteristics of a long line of ancestors recur in ever-new combinations.

It might be supposed that the high nobility of Europe represents a purer race, but the opposite is true. The genealogies show that here particularly mixtures from all parts of Europe are the rule. The nobility of Sweden, for instance, is largely of foreign origin.

It is a fiction to speak of a German race. We should rather ask what types of physical build are represented among the Germans. Here we encounter a complete lack of unity. Blonds with long heads in the North, darker people with short heads in the South; broad faces here, narrow ones there; noses turned up and aquiline, the general build tall and short, broad and slight. There is no "German race"; there are only local types which are very different one from another, each of which comprises individuals of different characteristics, so that representatives of all these types may be found in any part of Germany and of the neighboring countries. The East German is closer to his Polish neighbor than to the Frisian; the Tyrolese shows more similarity to the East Alpine Slav than to the North German, the Rhinelander more to the neighboring Frenchman than to the German in more distant parts.

National groups and local types have nothing in common.

IV.

SINCE the Jews are considered as a thoroughly different element, we must define their racial position. There is no more a Semitic than there is an Aryan race, since both terms define linguistic groups, not human beings. We can only speak of Near Eastern types. There are at least two or three very different Near Eastern types: dark Armenians, lighter Kurds, and the long-headed Southern type. As long as we have known Jews at all, all three—and perhaps even other European strains—have been represented among them. The Jews are not a uniform race. The Armenoid type is very closely related to that of the Dinaric peoples, the inhabitants of the region east of the Adriatic Sea, so much so that in some cases the Tyrolese and the Armenoid can hardly be distinguished with certainty. Similarly, a relationship exists between the Syrian and the Mediterranean types. The contrast between the blond Northwest European and the dark Southeast German is just as great as the difference between the latter and the Armenoid Jew.

This statement does not mean that there are no finer distinctions in physical build between most Jews and most non-Jewish Europeans; the differences, however, are not fundamental. It is well known that dark Syroïd Jews are often taken for Spaniards or Italians, Armenoids for South Slavs or other Alpines, and blond, blue-eyed Jews for Northwest Europeans.

In addition to all this, the Jews of different countries are not similar in their physical characteristics and, moreover, a certain similarity exists between them and their neighbors. To us this fact is most strikingly apparent in the case of the old East African and Asiatic Jews, who closely resemble the people among whom they live or lived.

Toward the end of antiquity and in the early Middle Ages, when Jews as well as Christians converted people of other beliefs, miscegenation was not rare. Jews converted their slaves to Judaism and made proselytes just as the Christians did. Likewise, in the first centuries of our era marriages between Jews and Christians were frequent. In the year 633 the Council of Toledo decreed that marriages between Jews and Christians should be dissolved unless the Jew embraced the Christian faith—a clear proof that such marriages were quite common. In southern Germany it has happened that a whole ghetto was driven into a river and forcibly baptized. With that they became marriageable.

Intermarriage is probably not the sole factor which has led to the development of local types among Jews. The human body is not absolutely independent of its environment, and it is probable that the local types depend in part on the natural and social environment to which the inhabitants of a certain sector are exposed.

It follows from all this that we cannot draw sharp lines of distinction between present-day European groups, and that in larger groups—German, French, Jewish, Finnish, Hungarian, etc., there exist many hereditary lines with similar characteristics, so that even when physical attributes such as blondness occur with great frequency, other physically conditioned characteristics vary widely.

V.

NEVERTHELESS, all this is merely the background for the question on which is based the whole "Aryan" theory of the uniqueness of the German character; that is, to what extent psychic behavior is dependent upon physical form. That there do exist individual relations between physical build and mentality cannot be doubted. A human being whose brain contains anatomical defects and therefore does not function properly

cannot be mentally normal. A genius cannot be made out of an idiot.

It is rash, however, to maintain that any difference in physical build is inevitably connected with a difference in psychic life. The functions of the body are extraordinarily adaptable. The circulation of a physically inactive person living in a hot climate at sea level and that of another of the same type, physically active and living on a high plateau where the air pressure is low, are fundamentally different. All the bodily functions alter considerably with the environmental conditions. This is equally true in regard to mentality. Social conditions most emphatically influence the mental attitude as a whole. Attempts have been made to correlate the mental behavior of a man with his physical build, to find out, for instance, whether a long-headed, blond person will have reactions different from those of a round-headed, dark-skinned individual. All strictly scientific experiments of this nature prove that within the same social background such relations do not exist. Even the studies of human constitution, in which the relations between abnormal mental phenomena and physical build are investigated, do not show that every human being of a certain extreme physical build *must* suffer from mental disturbances. These occur with greater frequency among extreme physical types. But no group consists of extreme types only. On the contrary, the intermediate, average types are the most common, and in regard to them no relation between physical build and mental behavior is demonstrable.

Of course it cannot be denied that groups like the Swabians and the Frisians are mentally not alike. It may even be admitted that Frisian and Swabian peasants who have been settled for a long time and have multiplied through inbreeding, may show mental differences based upon physical factors. It can easily be shown how dependent mental differences are upon social conditions. For instance, exact observations have been made on Negroes who have moved from the country to the city and it has been shown that assimilation of these people to the behavior of the city population takes place within a few years. Likewise it has been shown in the case of Italian immigrants that they grow to resemble the Americans in behavior the longer they have been in this country. One of the most instructive illustrations of this assimilation is the ease with which children adopt the dialect and manner of expression of their environment. Similarly, thorough-going studies of families show how deeply dependent the character and behavior of each individual member of a family is upon his personal relations within the family.

Naturally, bodily forms are not alike in separate regions or in different classes of society, but in every population there are to be found such utterly different types that it would be difficult to assign any one individual

with certainty, solely by means of bodily form to the local or social group to which he belongs. Also, every region and every group has a fairly definite mental character. It has never been proved that this is determined by the physical type of the people, but there are many observations indicating that it is due to the cultural bond which unites the people. Heredity may explain a part of the pronounced mental similarities between parents and children; but this explanation cannot be transferred to explain on hereditary grounds the similarity of behavior of entire nations in which the most varied hereditary lines occur. These assume their characteristic forms under the pressure of society. The extent to which the type of civilization conditions the manifestations of mental life may be observed in phenomena such as the epidemic mental disturbances of the Middle Ages. Whole masses of the people fell victim to ecstatic dances, such as we may still witness in revival meetings. In how far in our times such ecstatic behavior could be repeated on a large scale is a question that, in view of prevailing hysterias, we may well hesitate to answer. The religious fanaticism of the Crusades could probably not be called forth today; but at the present time other types of fanaticism have taken its place.

The attempt that is being made by those who are in power in Germany to justify on scientific grounds their attitude toward the Jews is built on a pseudo-science. No one has ever proved that a human being, through his descent from a certain group of people, must of necessity have certain mental characteristics. A nation is not to be defined by its descent but by its language and customs. Otherwise Germans, Frenchmen, and Italians would not be nationalities. Language and customs are determined far more by the environment in which the child grows up than by its descent, because the physical attributes, so far as they have any influence at all, occur with extraordinary variety within every group.

Just as the Germanized Slavs and French have become German in their culture, as the Frenchified Germans have become French, the Russianized ones Russian; so have the German Jews become Germans.